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## CIA's Recruiting Methods Sour Many

The Central Intelligence Agency's recruiting methods have soured many applicants who can't understand why they have been denied employment in the spook shop.

Some of them, in their frustration, have called my office for help in landing jobs with the CIA — an action which, in itself, raises serious doubts about their grasp of reality and suitability for the spy business.

Nevertheless, their complaints bore looking into, because the disappointed applicants suspected they were turned down on grounds of race, gender or religion, or perhaps a skeleton in their family closet, or failure to pass the agency's highly intimate lie detector test.

My associate Dale Van Atta has investigated the CIA's recruitment practices, tapping more than a dozen sources in the intelligence community. He has found evidence of a systematic, and disturbing, policy aimed at hiring a particular type of person — and only that type. What the agency wants are people who are bright, but not too bright, imaginative, but not creative, sociable and action-oriented — but above all, obedient.

In short, the CIA wants team players, not boat rockers. "Everybody's cut from the same cookie mold now," observed one high-level CIA official. "They're looking for conformists, people who are imaginative, but not too pushy."

Some oldtimers clearly mourn the passing of the derring-do days of the 1950s and 1960s, when enterprising agents could bring off dramatic intelligence coups. Admittedly, of course, this free-wheeling attitude also brought its share of disasters, like the Bay of Pigs and some preposterous assassination attempts.

One veteran CIA man illustrated the difference between yesterday's romantic spirit and today's button-down mentality by noting that many accepted applicants' first question is what their pension will be.

The CIA's quest for team players has been codified for bureaucratic reference under a psychiatric method called the Personality Assessment System, or PAS. The method is no secret, but its use by the agency in recent years has been kept secret.

CIA sources say the recruiters look for what PAS describes as the Externalizer-Regulated-Adaptive personality. According to a 28-page CIA manual, the Externalizer "tends to be an active individual more interested in doing than thinking... [who] must exert considerable effort when compelled to work with ideas... is practical, concrete and works by 'feel' or by trial and error."

The Regulated type "learns procedures easily and often by rote... [and] does not insist upon perspective... seeing the world in ordered 'blacks and whites.'"

An Adaptive type is "chameleon-like... magnetic, charming, captivating, a person who moves easily in a variety of social situations."

One source said the sought-after individuals are "like infantrymen who have enough training and ability to handle their increasingly complex weapons, but who are not so flexible as to be able to question orders — the individuals who perform without asking why."

All this does not mean the CIA is staffed solely with unthinking robots. Some superb agents still make it through the PAS regimentation, and many senior officials still provide the questioning, imaginative leavening needed by an intelligence agency.